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REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of this Patent Application, particularly in view of the above Amendment and the following remarks. No additional fee is required for this Amendment as the number of independent claims has not changed, and the total number of claims is not more than twenty.

Request for Telephone Interview

Applicants kindly request the Examiner to contact the undersigned to schedule a telephone interview, to discuss the merits of this Patent Application.

Amendment to the Claims

Applicants have canceled independent Claim 1 and added new independent Claim 13.

Applicants have amended dependent Claims 2, 4, and 6 to depend from new Claim 13 instead of canceled Claim 1, and to provide proper antecedent basis for claim limitations.

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Applicants have amended Claims 3, 5, 8, and 9 to depend from independent Claims 10-12, respectively, instead of canceled Claim 1, and to provide proper antecedent basis for claim limitations.

Applicants have amended Claims 10-12 to remove element numbers.

No new matter has been added to the claims by this Amendment.

New Claims

Applicants have added new independent Claim 13. New Claim 13 includes limitations from canceled Claim 1 and original Claims 3 and 5. Support for Claim 13 can be found page 7, line 4 through page 8, line 8, of Applicants' Substitute Specification and FIGS. 4A and 4B.

Applicants have added new dependent Claims 14-21 to depend from independent Claims 10-12, respectively. New Claims 14-21 include limitations from original Claims 2-7, respectively.

No new matter has been added to the claims by this Amendment.

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Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. §112

Claims 1-9 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, for the reasons set forth at page 2 of the Office Action. Applicants have canceled independent Claim 1 and added new independent Claim 13. Applicants respectfully assert that the rejection of Claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. §112 is rendered moot, and that new Claim 13 is not indefinite.

Applicants believe that the above Amendment and comments overcome the rejection of Claims 1-9 under 35 U.S.C. §112.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 1, 8, and 9 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 4,455,801 (“Merritt”) in view of U.S. Patent 4,099,355 (“Strunk”) and Japan Abstract 10002040 (“Nobuo et al.”). Applicants have canceled Claim 1. Applicants have also amended Claims 8 and 9 to depend from Claims 12 and 11, respectively, which the Examiner has allowed. Therefore, Applicants believe that the above Amendment and comments overcome the rejection of Claims 1, 8, and 9 under 35 U.S.C. §103.

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Claims 2-4 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Merritt, as modified by Strunk and Nobuo et al. as applied to Claim 1 above, and further in view of U.S. Patent 6,293,069 ("Monda et al."). Amended Claims 2 and 4 depend from new Claim 13, which, for reasons explained below, Applicants believe is patentable over the cited prior art. Amended Claim 3 depends from Claim 10, which the Examiner has allowed. Therefore, Applicants believe that the above Amendment and comments overcome the rejection of Claims 2-4 under 35 U.S.C. §103.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner indicates in the Office Action that each of Claims 5 and 6 contains allowable subject matter. Applicants have added new independent Claim 13 which includes limitations from Claim 5, base Claim 1, and original intervening Claim 3. Applicants respectfully assert that as Claim 13 includes the allowable subject matter of Claim 5, Claim 13 is in condition for allowance.

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Claims 10-12 are allowed. Amended dependent Claims 3, 5, 8, and 9 and new Claims 14-21 each depend from one of Claims 10-12, and are thus patentable for at least the same reasons as Claims 10-12.

Conclusion

Applicants intend to be fully responsive to the outstanding Office Action. If the Examiner detects any issue which the Examiner believes Applicants have not addressed in this response, Applicants' undersigned attorney requests a telephone interview with the Examiner.

Applicants sincerely believe that this Patent Application is now in condition for allowance and, thus, respectfully request early allowance.

Respectfully submitted,



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